



OKOTOKS EVANGELICAL FREE CHURCH

I am Second

JOHN 3:22-30; PHILIPPIANS 2:1-4
MARCH 19-25, 2017

SERMON OUTLINE

I am Second

1 Samuel 23:14-18

When Fears threaten to overwhelm, everyone needs a Jonathan

1. Someone who meets us with a Spiritual Purpose
2. Someone who gives us an Encouraging Reminder
 - A reminder of God's Power
 - A reminder of God's Promise
3. Someone who Embraces us with a Sustaining Covenant

Are you ready to be a 'Jonathan' for someone?

What do I need to do with what I have heard today?

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MAIN POINT

People who love Christ will seek to exalt Him in their lives.

THINKING THINGS THROUGH

Connect the sermon to the study.

1. If you have watched any of the “I Am Second” videos or the edited video from Sunday, what do you think about the idea behind the “I Am Second” movement?

2. Why is the idea of “I Am Second” so important spiritually and even relationally?

Leader: We live in a culture that constantly encourages us to “look out for No. 1,” to put ourselves first, and to do whatever it takes to get ahead. We value the idea of the self-made person. We want the glory for ourselves. It is hard in a “me first” culture to willingly take a back seat, but Scripture gives us a better way. John the Baptist pointed away from himself and to Jesus. Christ’s success was John’s success. Likewise, Paul offered that we should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

DIGGING DEEPER

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 3:22-30.

3. Why do you think John’s disciples told him about the crowds that Jesus was drawing? What might have motivated them to point this out?

4. What are some ways that we try and measure ourselves by external circumstances? Why do we do this? What is a better way?

5. Who was John and what was his role? How was John able to avoid jealousy and pride at Jesus’ growing popularity at the expense of his own? How hard would it be for you to avoid being jealous? Why?

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Leader: The John in John 3:22-30 is the prophet John, often referred to as John the Baptist. As a prophet of God, John had the responsibility of preparing people for the coming of Jesus, the Messiah of God, and his message involved repentance of sin and baptism. John's disciples might have been jealous on John's behalf. They saw that Jesus and His disciples kept growing in popularity, and even some of those who used to follow John were now becoming followers of Jesus. Because John was a prophet, though, he knew exactly who Jesus was. When others prosper it is easy to grow jealous of their success. John avoided this prideful trap by remembering who he was, who he wasn't, and that it is God who gives gifts to all.

6. What does John's attitude teach you about your responsibility as a follower of Christ today?

7. What are some of the temptations that make becoming less for the sake of Jesus particularly hard for you to do?

Leader: Our duty as Christians is not to build our own little kingdoms and reputations. We are to point to Christ just as John the Baptist did. We want people to grow in their faith, and we should be happy when they do so even if we are not as popular as we think we ought to be. The example of John the Baptist and Jesus teaches us that to truly love and serve others, we need to esteem others more than we esteem ourselves.

> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ PHILIPPIANS 2:1-4.

8. What additional insight does this text give us into the impact that our redemption should have on us? What are the implications for our love and service of others?

9. What does it mean to "do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit" (v. 3)? Why are both humility and selflessness vital if we are going to serve others well?

10. If we are following Jesus, being second might not be far enough down the line. Why does love demand that we account others as being more important than ourselves? How can you look out for the interests of others this week?

Leader: Paul pointed to Christ's love for others and His obedient service to God as examples for his Philippian friends. We are to live with an attitude of humility as we relate to others. With a healthy and balanced view of ourselves, we neither think too

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highly nor too little of ourselves. With that wholesome attitude, we can serve Jesus and others effectively.

DOING LIFE TOGETHER

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

11. Is there anyone whose success you have been jealous of? How could you work this week to bring humility to bear on this situation?

12. How might you decrease to self this week and allow Christ to increase in you? Are there any practices you could implement that might help you put this into action?

13. Why is having a “Christ first, then others” attitude essential for doing kingdom work? When we live with an I am second attitude, how does this place us in a better position for Christ to work through us?

PRAYER

Pray that in humility you would step aside to let Christ shine in and through you. Ask that God would help you get rid of harmful “me first” thinking and willingly choose to be second for the cause of Christ.

MEMORIZE

He must become greater; I must become less. – John 3:30

SPOTLIGHT ON THE PASSAGE

JOHN 3:22-30

3:22-23. An argument was about to break out between two ministry teams regarding the popularity of one of the leaders. Jealousy seemed to be the motive and in the context of the times we can certainly understand the event. Remember, in the New Testament we still find adherence to John’s baptism twenty years after Jesus’ resurrection. Two different baptismal groups, headed by two different leaders, baptizing in two different cities—both claiming messianic connections. Two things seem important in the text: (1) John’s ongoing baptism was hardly competitive because he still proclaimed Jesus and presumably attracted even more people to the Lamb, and (2) although verse 23 talks about Jesus baptizing, we learn in John 4:2 that he supervised the activity and the disciples themselves did the baptizing.

3:24-26. Why did not John tell us more about the Baptist’s imprisonment as the Synoptists did (Matt. 14:1-12; Mark 6:14, 29; Luke 3:19-20)? That event simply did not fit his purpose. John the

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apostle dealt with John the Baptist only insofar as the latter served the introduction and explanation of Jesus Christ. John and Jesus both understood this perfectly. Writing as we have seen with the benefit of lengthy hindsight, the apostle John could put the whole thing in perspective for his readers.

But the argument was real. According to the Dead Sea Scrolls, people at the time were interested in the finer points of ceremonial purification. John the Baptist hardly observed the finer points of anything. Petty bickering over church ritual has been a blind spot in the behavior of Christians since the days of Jesus. The very one who wrote these words, while still in his younger days, said to the one of whom he wrote, "Master ... we saw a man driving out demons in your name and we tried to stop him, because he is not one of us" (Luke 9:49). Jesus replied to John the apostle, "Do not stop him ... for whoever is not against you is for you" (Luke 9:50). This competition was encouraged neither by Jesus nor John. We would do well to notice that envy or jealousy over someone else's popularity, especially in ministry, can never advance God's kingdom but only deteriorate our spiritual lives.

3:27-28. What kept this popular prophet so humble? We see in this passage his awareness of God's sovereignty, of his own unworthiness, and of the preeminence of Christ in the world. This response by John almost becomes a standard Christian principle: man can receive only what is given him from heaven. The principle certainly applies to John, whose disciples seemed to have wanted his status elevated. It applies to Jesus, about whom many still had questions, but whose greatness John constantly affirms. And it applies to us, who dare not exercise authority or leadership in ministry beyond what God has gifted us and called us to do. The word heaven in this context refers back to God, since throughout this Gospel John saw everything as coming from the hand of the Father.

3:29-30. The bride/bridegroom theme introduces the church, although this Gospel says little about that important New Testament theme. The bride (the church), including the disciples who were then following John, belonged to the bridegroom (Christ). John described himself as the friend of the bridegroom, delighted to see him claim his own. Surely John 3:30 is one of the great verses of the Bible: He must become greater; I must become less.

This wedding scene builds on Old Testament imagery of Jehovah as the husband of Israel (Isa. 54:5; 62:4; Jer. 2:2; 3:20; Ezek. 16:8; Hos. 2:19). Now in the new covenant, the Messiah becomes the bridegroom of the church. This important theme radiates through the New Testament (2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 5:32), culminating in Revelation 19:7-8. So the bride and bridegroom imagery is well established in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. As the friend of the bridegroom, John emphasized his delight and joy rather than jealousy over Jesus' arrival and instant popularity. It is said of the pioneer missionary, William Carey, that when he was close to death he turned to a friend and said, "When I am gone, don't talk about William Carey; talk about William Carey's Savior. I desire that Christ alone might be magnified."

PHILIPPIANS 2:1-4

Paul built his challenge for unity on the reality of Christ within each believer. The phrase encouragement in Christ refers to encouragement that comes from Christian commitment. That Christ lived in the Philippians' hearts was indeed a great blessing for them. The term comfort from love refers to Christ's love for them. Believers are the eternal recipients of God's tender affection not because they deserve love, but because it is God's nature to love. The participation in the Spirit emphasizes the shared nature of the Christian life. The presence of the Holy Spirit makes possible the proper functioning of the body of Christ. With the expression affection and sympathy, Paul pointed to the mercies the Lord had given the believers at Philippi. The Holy Spirit provided rich fellowship among them (v. 1).

In verse 2 Paul shifted from the spiritual blessings the believers enjoyed together to their

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responsibility to him. The Philippian believers had a heartfelt concern for Paul. He planted the church at Philippi. They watched as he invested his life in their lives. Now he called them to continue what they started.

In contrast to his positive instructions, Paul also detailed for the Philippians what attitudes to avoid in pursuing unity. The word nothing (v. 3) emphasized Paul's conviction that rivalry or conceit should not taint any aspect of the church's life. The term rivalry implies a selfish ambition that causes disputes and divisions. The sense is that the problems facing the Philippians caused members to choose sides. Paul saw schisms in the church as contrary to the testimony of Christ and dishonoring to God's name. Also the word conceit describes what is vainglorious or groundless pride. The cornerstone of Christian faith is that humans are powerless to save themselves and must trust Christ to provide all that is necessary for salvation. Thus the believer has no basis for arrogance toward others. Furthermore, arrogance strikes at the heart of Christian unity, spoiling the testimony of the faithful.

To avoid such a destructive mind-set, Paul directed the believers to consider fellow Christians and their needs as more important than their own interests and concerns (v. 4). The church's antidote for selfishness and divisions is an abiding concern for the welfare of others. Paul called the believers to take careful note of the concerns others hold. Such willing consideration of others erases the gaps between individuals and builds a strong unity.